Cult from outer space claims to have cloned baby

From David Adams
in Hallandale Beach, Florida

A FRENCH scientist and member of a free-love cult which believes the human race is descended from space aliens claimed yesterday to have genetically engineered the world's first human clone.

The 7lb baby girl, named Eve, was delivered by Caesarean section at an undisclosed location on Thursday, according to Dr Brigitte Boisselier, head of Clonaid, a company linked to the Quebec-based Raelian Movement. The time of birth was 11.55am, although the time zone and continent were not revealed.

An identical clone of its unnamed 31-year-old American mother, the baby was "doing fine", Dr Boisselier told a news conference at a beach hotel near Miami. "The whole family is very happy," she added.

Dr Boisselier, a chemist, provided no scientific evidence but promised to allow independent experts to examine the baby within the next week.

She was dressed all in black down to her fishnet stockings with orange-dyed hair, and her performance was not entirely convincing — she frequently broke into giggles and her scientific explanation merely likened the process to the existing cloning of sheep, "adapted to human cells".

The birth was recorded on video but the tape was not released to protect the identity of the parents and doctors.

The parents opted for cloning due to male infertility, Dr Boisselier said. Cells from the woman's skin were inserted into an egg. Clonaid claims that Eve is the first of five clones successfully engineered this spring in its laboratories.

Ten women were impregnated, Dr Boisselier claimed but five pregancies miscarried in the first three weeks. Five others have progressed to full term, with Eve the first to be born. The next birth is expected in northern Europe to a lesbian couple. Others involve cells taken from two dead children to clone replicas.

Claiming to have given new hope to thousands of couples unable to have children, Dr Boisselier defended cloning as an extension of changes in society already under way.

"This is the revolution we are living. Society is changing," she said. "It's the right of every parent to choose the child they want. Science should never be stopped. I believe in challenging science, but not prohibition."

Raelians, who claim 55,000 members worldwide, believe that life on Earth was created by alien scientists who arrived 25,000 year ago on space craft and perfected cloning.

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"You can have any colour you like, as long as it's green"

The Times Today: page 2. Crossword: 32. Law Report: 50-51. Sport: 33-46. Money: 53-56

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